

*the Life of Robert Hill*

A PARALLEL;

In the manner of PLUTARCH:

Between a most celebrated

Man of FLORENCE;

And ONE, scarce ever heard of, in

ENGLAND.

By the Reverend Mr. SPENCE.

— *Parvis componere magna.* — VIRGIL.

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For the Benefit of Mr. HILL.

M DCC LIX.





THE  
L I F E  
OF  
SIGN<sup>R</sup>. MAGLIABECHI.

**A**MONG the number of  
eminent men which the  
city of Florence has produced  
since the revival of literature,  
one of the most extraordinary,  
and of the most celebrated in  
his time, was ANTONIO MAG-  
LIABECHI : And indeed there

A 2

are

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are such uncommon things asserted of him, and so far exceeding the bounds of probability, as may seem to require some apology even for repeating them ; it may therefore not be improper to premise, that the chief authorities on which the following account of him is founded, are Florentines ; that the Italians in general, and the Florentines in particular, delight in a higher and larger way of speaking than is usual among us ; that they deal much in superlatives ; and that their superlative,  
like

5  
*Signr* MAGLIABECHI. 5

like that in the Latin language from which it is derived, signifies, VERY MUCH; as well as, THE MOST : That whatever I have quoted from books, is, in general very punctually referred to in the notes, and often, the very words of the authors inserted ; and that whatever is not so authorized, is what I have learned in conversation with gentlemen of the city of Florence, who were personally acquainted with MAGLIABECHI, men of learning and reputation, and of very good credit, both for knowledge

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ledge and veracity. Thus assisted, I have undertaken to give some account of this extraordinary, and so much admired man.

MAGLIABECHI was born at Florence on the 29th of October\*, in the year 1633. His parents were of so low and mean a rank, that they were very well satisfied when they had got him into the service of a man who sold herbs and

\* From his article in Moreri's Dictionary. Nicéron, in his *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire des Hommes Illustres*, says, it was on the 28th.



*Signr.* MAGLIABECHI. 7

fruit. He had never learned to read; and yet he was perpetually poring over the leaves of old books, that were used as waste paper in his master's shop. A bookseller who lived in the neighbourhood, and who had often observed this, and knew the boy could not read, asked him one day, "What he meant  
" by staring so much on printed  
" paper?" He said, "That he  
" did not know how it was,  
" but that he loved it of all  
" things; that he was very un-  
" easy in the business he was in,  
" and

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“ and should be the happiest  
“ creature in the world, if he  
“ could live with him, who had  
“ always so many books about  
“ him.” The bookseller was  
astonished, and yet pleased with  
his answer ; and at last told him,  
that he should not be disinclined  
to take him into his shop, if  
his master would be willing to  
part with him. Young MAG-  
LIABECHI thanked him with  
tears of joy in his eyes ; and  
his happiness was highly en-  
creased, when his master, on  
the bookseller’s desire, gave him  
leave

*Sign<sup>r</sup>* MAGLIABECHI. 9

leave to go where he pleased. He went therefore directly to his new and much desired business<sup>\*</sup>; and had not been long in it, before he could find out any book that was asked for, as ready as the bookseller could himself. Some time after this he learned to read, and as soon

<sup>\*</sup> This account I had from a gentleman of Florence, who was very well acquainted with MAGLIABECHI and his family: There are other accounts very different from this. Salvini says that he was at first, in an honourable, but not literary employ: And Father Nicéron, that he was apprentice to a goldsmith. I do not pretend to determine, which of the three accounts are the truest.

B

as

as he had, he was always ‡ reading when he could.

He seems never to have applied himself to any particular study. A passion for reading was his ruling passion ; and a prodigious memory his great talent. He read every book almost indifferently, as they happened to come into his hands.

‡ “ Ne’ Libri, che esser dovenano di tutto il  
“ suo vivere compagni inseparabili ; ne’ Libri,  
“ uniche delizie, unici suoi amori, s’ intrat-  
“ teneva.” *Salvini, Ora. Fun. p. 7.* And he  
speaks of his, “ Virtuosa Bramasia di sempre  
“ leggere,” just after ; and confirms these passages  
in several other places. See pages 9, 11, 22,  
and 27 ; *ibid.*



*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 11

He read them with a surprizing quickness, and yet retained not only the sense of what he read, but often all the words, and the very manner of spelling them, if there was any thing peculiar of that kind in any author.

His extraordinary application, and talents, soon recommended him to Ermini\*, and Marmi†, the Great Duke's librarian. He

B 2 was

\* Librarian to the Cardinal of Medicis.

† Father Nicéron names these two as his great friends; and it may probably be of the latter that Salvini says, "Un nobile, letterato, e generoso spirito della città nostro dal suo im-  
" piego

was by them introduced into the  
 conversations of the learned,  
 and made known at court :  
 And began to be looked upon  
 every where as a prodigy ||, par-  
 ticularly for his vast and un-  
 bounded memory.

It is said, that there was a  
 trial made of the force of his  
 memory, which, if true, is

“ piego il levò ; e nelle letterarie conversazioni  
 “ lo introdusse ; e alla Real Corte di Toscana  
 “ il fe conoscere.” *Or. Fun. p. 8.*

|| “ Fu egli ammirato fin da principio, come  
 “ un prodigio, di quella parte principalmente  
 “ dell’Anima che Memorias’ appella.” *Ib. p. 8.*

very

*Signr.* MAGLIABECHI. 13

very amazing. A gentleman at Florence, who had written a piece which was to be printed, lent the manuscript to MAGLIABECHI ; and some time after it had been returned with thanks, came to him again with a melancholy face, and told him of some invented accident, by which, he said, he had lost his manuscript : The author seemed almost inconsolable for the loss of his work, and intreated MAGLIABECHI, whose character for remembering what he read was already very great, to try to recollect

collect as much of it as he possibly could, and write it down for him, against his next visit. MAGLIABECHI assured him he would, and on setting about it, wrote down the whole manuscript\*, without missing a word,

\* There is, I believe, at least as much difference in the English and Florentine ways of speaking, when we praise or extol any thing, as there may be between the Florentine and the Oriental. A Florentine will call a good tolerable house, for instance, a *PALLACE*; and a little snug flower garden a *PARADISE*. This, and all the other anecdotes in this account are from Florentines, as I have said before, and certainly in most of them, some allowance should be made for the Florentine way of speaking; I having generally expressed what I had from them in their language, literally in our own.

OR



*Sign<sup>r</sup>* MAGLIABECHI. 15  
or even varying any where from  
the spelling.

By treasuring up every thing  
he read in so strange a man-  
ner, or at least the subject, and  
all the principal parts of all  
the books he ran over ; his  
head became at last, as one of  
his acquaintance expressed it to  
me, “ An universal Index both  
“ of titles and matter.”

By this time MAGLIABECHI  
was grown so famous for the  
vast extent of his reading, and  
his amazing retention of what

he had read, that it began to grow common amongst the learned to consult him, when they were writing on any subject : Thus for instance, if a priest was going to compose a panegyric on such a saint, and came to communicate his design to MAGLIABECHI, he would immediately tell him, who had said any thing of that saint, and in what part of their works, and that sometimes, to the number of above a hundred authors. He would tell them not only who had treated of their  
subject

*Signr.* MAGLIABECHI. 17

subject designedly, but of such also as had touched upon it only accidentally, in writing on other subjects; both which he did with the greatest exactness, naming the author, the book, the words, and often the very number of the page \* in which they were inserted. He did this so often, so readily, and so exactly, that he came at last to be looked upon almost as an

\* Salvini expresses this yet more strongly:

“ Et non che il libro; ma la pagina, la

“ colonna, il verso, ne additava.” *Or. Fun.*

p. 15.

C.

oracle,

oracle\*, for the ready and full answers that he gave to all questions, that were proposed to him in any faculty or science whatever.

It was his great eminence this way, and his vast, I had almost said, inconceivable knowledge of books, that induced the Great Duke, Cosimo the

\* “ Il MAGLIABECHI fu tanto rinomato per  
 “ la sua Biblioteca ; e per il vasto suo sapere, che  
 “ sembiava quasi un oracolo, per le pronte e saggie  
 “ sue risposte, in qualunque facoltà fosse ricer-  
 “ cato.” Mancurti, in his life of Crescem-  
 beni. *See the latter's history of Italian poetry,*  
 T. 6. p. 233.

Third,



*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 19

Third, to do him the honour of making him his librarian ; and what a happiness must it have been to MAGLIABECHI, who delighted in nothing so much as in reading, to have the supreme command and use of such a collection of books as that in the Great Duke's palace. He was also very conversant with the books in the Lorenzo library\* ; and had the keeping of those of Leopoldo, and Francesco Maria, the two Cardinals of Tuscany.

\* Salvini ; *Or. Fun.* p. 10 and 11,

And yet even all this did not satisfy his extensive appetite ; for one who knew him well told me, “ One may say, “ that he had read almost all “ books :” By which as he explained himself, he meant the greatest part of those printed before his time \*, and all in it : For it was latterly a general

\* Salvini goes farther, for he says ; “ Non “ vi era minimolibretto, ch’ egli non conoscesse.” *Or. Fun. p. 15.* And Crescembeni, speaking of a dispute whether a certain poem had ever been printed or not, concludes it had not, “ Because “ MAGLIABECHI had never seen it.” *Istoria della Volg. Poes. T. 4. p. 23.*

custom,

*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 21

custom, not only among the authors, but the printers too of those times, to make him a present of a copy of whatever they published ; which, by the way, must have been a considerable help towards the very large collection of books, which he himself made.

To read such vast numbers as he did, he latterly made use of a method as extraordinary, as any thing I have hitherto mentioned of him. When a book first came into  
his

his hands, he would look the title page all over, then dip here and there in the preface, dedication, and advertisements, if there were any ; and then cast his eyes on each of the divisions, the different sections, or chapters, and then he would be able for ever to know what that book contained : For he remembered as steadily, as he conceived rapidly.

It was after he had taken to this way of fore-shortening his reading, if I may be allowed so  
odd



*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 23

odd an expression ; and I think, I rather may, because he conceived the matter almost as compleatly in this short way, as if he had read it at full length ; that a priest who had composed a panegyric on one of his favorite saints, brought it to MAGLIABECHI, as a present. He read it over the very way above mentioned ; only the title page, and the heads of the chapters ; and then thanked him very kindly, “ For his excellent treatise.” The author, in some pain, asked him, “ whether

“ther that was all that he in-

“tended to read of his book?”

MAGLIABECHI coolly answered,

“Yes ; for I know very well

“every thing that is in it.”

My author for this anecdote endeavoured to account for it in the following manner. MAGLIABECHI, says he, knew all that the writers before had said of this saint ; he knew this particular father’s turn and character ; and from thence judged, what he would chuse out of them, and what he would omit. If this way of accounting for  
fo

*Signr.* MAGLIABECHI. 25

so extraordinary a thing may not seem satisfactory to some, it must at least be allowed to be ingenious by all.

MAGLIABECHI had a local memory too of the places where every book stood ; as in his master's shop at first, and in the Pitti, and several other libraries afterwards : And seems to have carried this farther, than only in relation to the collections of books with which he was personally acquainted. One day the Great Duke sent for

D

him

him after he was his librarian, to ask him whether he could get him a book that was particularly scarce. "No, Sir," answered MAGLIABECHI, "it is  
" impossible; for there is but  
" one in the world; that is in  
" the Grand Signior's library at  
" Constantinople, and is the  
" seventh book on the second  
" shelf on the right hand as  
" you go in."

Though MAGLIABECHI must have lived so sedentary a life, with such an intense and almost  
perpetual



*Sign<sup>r</sup>* MAGLIABECHI. 27

perpetual application to books, yet he arrived to a good old age. He died in his eighty-first year, on July 14, 1714\*. By his will he left a very fine library of his own collection, for the use of the public, with a fund to maintain it ; and whatever should remain over, to the poor.

He was not an ecclesiastic, but chose never to marry ; and was quite negligent, or rather

\* Lavocat ; in his *Dictionnaire Historique Portatif*. Art. MAGLIABECHI : Probably, from Salvini's *Or. Fun.* p. 29.

quite slovenly in his dress. His appearance was such, as must have been far from engaging the affection of a lady, had he addressed himself to any ; and his face in particular, as appears by the several representations of him, whether in his busts, medals, pictures, or prints, would rather have prejudiced his fate, than advanced it : He received his friends, and those who came to consult him in any points of literature, in a civil and obliging manner ; though in general he had almost the air of a savage,

*Sign<sup>r</sup>*. MAGLIABECHI. 29

vage, and even affected it ; together with a cinical, or contemptuous smile\*, which scarce rendered his look the more agreeable. Salvini himself, just after he has been speaking of his person, cannot help thinking of the || fatyrs that Socrates was compared to of old.

In his manner of living, he affected the character of Diogenes ; three hard eggs, and a draught or two of water, was his usual repast. When any

\* Or. Fund. p. 13.

|| Ibid, p. 18.

one went to see him, they most usually found him lolling in a sort of fixed wooden cradle, in the middle of his study, with a multitude of books, some ‡ thrown in heaps, and others scattered about the floor, all round him; and this his cradle, or bed, was attached to the nearest piles of books by a number of cobwebs: At their entrance, he commonly used to call out to them; “Not to hurt

‡ He used sometimes to loll and sleep upon piles of them: “Cui letto erano i libri,” says Salvini, “e sopra essi, (chi ’l crederà?) riposava.” *Or. Fun.* p. 27.

“his



*Signr.* MAGLIABECHI. 31

“ his spiders ! ” From this single anecdote we may conclude, that where a great friend of his commends him for his “ gentilezza || ; ” it must be understood, of his obligingness in answering any questions that were put to him in literary affairs ; and not of the genteelness of his person or behaviour, in general.

MAGLIABECHI was early made a member of The ARCADEI ; a society established at Rome,

|| “ Appresso l’ incomparabile, e per sapere e “ per gentilezza, ANTONIO MAGLIABECHI.”  
*Cresc. T. 3. p. 207.*

toward

toward the end of the last century for the revival of true taste, in poetry, eloquence, and the polite arts. Most of the eminent people all over Italy, and many of other countries, are enrolled in it ; and though of so much later date than many of the other academies in Italy, there is scarce any one of them, perhaps, that can boast the names of so many kings and princes, or popes and cardinals, as appear in their list. Their assemblies and games have ‡ for

‡ Ever since the year 1726.

*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 33

many years been kept in a theatre built on purpose for them in the gardens, now belonging to the King of Naples, on the Palatine-hill in Rome. It is here too that they have used, almost ever since their institution, to set up memorial inscriptions to some of the most worthy of their members. There is one to MAGLIABECHI, in the fourth year of the six hundred and twenty-fifth Olympiad, for they have revived that antient way of reckoning, in which he is stiled ; “ Their

E

“ coun-

“ counsellor, or oracle, in all  
 “ sorts of learning ||.”

Crescembeni, the great promoter and soul of this society for so many years, and § president of it ‡ from it's first establishment, to the end of his own life, has given the world a fuller account of these Arcadians, than is any where else to be met with, in his history of Italian poetry. He was a

|| OMNIGENAE ERUDITIONIS CONSULTO.

§ Custode.

‡ From 1690, to 1728.

particular



*Sign<sup>r</sup>.* MAGLIABECHI. 35

particular || friend of MAGLIA-  
BECHI ; with whom he got ac-  
quainted, when he was obliged  
to go into Tuscany for his  
health. He speaks of him fre-  
quently in his history just men-  
tioned, and never without some  
encomium. It is sufficient, I  
think, to say here, that among  
so many, and so various com-  
mendations, the lowest title

|| Crescembeni was at Florence in 1699,  
where he got acquainted with Buonarroti, Sal-  
vini, Accolti, and Averani ; “ Uomini tutti,”  
says my author, “ e per chiara fama, e per ec-  
cellenza di dottrina, molto illustri ; e sopra  
“ ogni altro, da ANTONIO MAGLIABECHI.”  
*Mancurti.*

E 2

which

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which he ever gives him, is  
that of “ the eminent MAGLIA-  
“ BECHI ‡.”

Moreri § says, “ That he was  
“ famous all over Europe, for  
“ his great knowledge in books,  
“ and in litterary history :” And  
Lavocat §, “ That he was con-  
“ sulted by all the learned in  
“ Europe ; and highly com-  
“ mended by them all.” And

‡ “ Dall insigne ANTONIO MAGLIABECHI.”  
T. 3. p. 44 The other generally run thus :  
“ Eruditissimo.” T. 1. p. 201. “ Ill degnissimo.”  
T. 4. 105.-----“ il celebratissimo.” T. 2. p. 410.  
-----“ l' incomparabile.” T. 4. p. 26.

§§ See his article in their dictionaries.

the

*Sign<sup>r</sup>* MAGLIABECHI. 37

the above cited Crescembeni confirms what is said by both of them ; and adds ‡, ‘ That as he  
‘ cannot find out any commen-  
‘ dation proportioned to his im-  
‘ mense erudition, after so many  
‘ that have been bestowed upon  
‘ him by the most learned per-  
‘ sons of his times, he should  
‘ chuse to repeat that of one of  
‘ the most eminent among them,  
‘ Cardinal Norris, who in one  
‘ of his works calls him §, “ The  
“ most learned man, and the

‡ *Istoria della Volgàr Poesia. T. I. p. 187.*

§ “ *Eruditissimum, et ubique non barbararum gentium laudatissimum virum.*”

“ most

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“ most applauded in all nations  
 “ of the world, which are not  
 “ inhabited by barbarians.”

Salvini made his funeral oration, in the Florentine academy ; by which MAGLIABECHI had been chosen for their secretary annually, for several years \* before his death : And even in the midst of that assembly of so many learned and eminent men, calls him †, “ The principal ornament of his country.” The whole speech con-

\* Or. Fun. p. 26.      † *Ibid.* p. 4.



*Sign<sup>r</sup>* MAGLIABECHI. 39

fists of compliments to his merit, or excuses for what might seem amiss in him ; and in the course of it, he gives him the titles of “ The great MAGLIA-  
“ BECHI ! || ”----“ The universal  
“ library ‡ ; ”----“ A prodigy of  
“ learning ! § ”--and some others,  
which may perhaps sound better  
in Italian, than they would in  
English.

Thus lived and died MAG-  
LIABECHI, in the midst of the

|| *Ibid.* p. 5.    ‡ p. 17.    § p. 23.

public

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public applause ; and with such an affluence, for all the latter part of his life, as very few persons have ever procured by their knowledge or learning.

THE  
L I F E  
OF  
MR. H I L L.

**R**OBERT HILL, son of  
Robert and Phæbe Hill,  
was born January 11, 1699,  
at Miswell, a little village of  
only three or four houses, near  
Tring in Hertfordshire. His  
mother's maiden name was  
Clark ; she lost her husband  
F within

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within the year; returned to her own family at Miswell; and about five years after, was married to Thomas Robinson, a taylor at Buckingham. On her going thither, she left our ROBERT, the only son of her first marriage, with his grandmother at Miswell; who taught him to read, and sent him to school for seven or eight weeks to learn to write; which was all the schooling he ever had. In the year 1710, she removed with her family from Miswell to Tring-grove; where little Ro-

BERT



BERT was employed in driving the plough, and other country business, for his uncle. But they finding this rather too much for his constitution, which was but weakly, thought an easy trade would be better for him ; and so bound him (1714) apprentice to his father-in-law, Robinson, the taylor, at Buckingham.

It was about two years after (1716) he was prentice, that he first happened to get an imperfect Accidence and Gram-

mar, and about three quarters of a Littleton's dictionary, into his possession. From the first moment of so great an acquisition, he was reading whenever he could ; and as they would scarce allow him any time from his work by day, he used to procure candles as privately as he could, and indulge himself in the violent passion he had for reading, for good part of the nights. He wanted greatly to learn Latin ; why, does not appear : For he himself does not remember any other reason for  
it

it at present, than that he might be able to read a few Latin epitaphs in their church. However that be, this pursuit of his was soon interrupted (1717), by the small-pox coming into Buckingham, and growing so violent there, that his friends sent him to Tring-grove; and, in the hurry, his books were left behind him. At the Grove, he was employed in keeping his uncle's sheep; and speaks of that occupation in as high a stile of happiness, as the romance-writers talk of their Arcadian

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cadian fwains : But what made it fo happy to him was, as he himfelf expreffes it, “that he  
 “could lye under a hedge, and  
 “read all day long.” His ftudy here confifted only of the Practice of Piety, the Whole Duty of Man, and Mauger’s French grammar. Thefe he read over and over fo often, that he had them almoft all by heart ; and has a great deal of them ftill. He ftayed there a year and a quarter ; and on his return to Buckingham (1719), he was highly delighted at feeing his  
 old



old friend the Latin grammar again; and immediately renewed his acquaintance with it. In this second attempt of his for Latin, he was assisted by some of his play-fellows among the boys at the free-school at Buckingham. He would do any thing that was in his power to serve them, if they would tell him the English of such words, or such rules in his grammar, as he found the most difficult to understand: And by such slow and laborious means, enabled himself to read a good  
part

part of a Latin testament which he had purchased, and a Cæsar's commentaries that had been given him, before he was out of his apprenticeship.

Soon after he was out of his time, he married (1721); and had Horace and a Greek testament added to his books, by the goodness of a gentleman for whom he was at work. As he could not bear to have a book in his hands, that he could not read; he no sooner received the latter, than he resolved to learn

learn Greek : And that very evening, communicated his design to a young gentleman, with whom he was acquainted ; who gave him a Greek grammar, and promised to assist him as far as he could in his design. HILL used to teach him to fish; and he used to help on HILL in his first great difficulty of acquiring the Greek language : And when he lost that friend, which he did very soon, for he died very young, he had the good fortune to be assisted, much more materially, by another.

In the mean time, as his wife proved a very good breeder, he found it necessary to do something to add to his income ; and therefore set up for a school-master\* (1724), as well as a taylor, and had so good success, that he had generally upwards of fifty scholars, for the six or seven years that he practised it. However, there were some difficulties that he met with, in his new employ. He had scarce been in it half a year,

\* For Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

when



when a lad well advanced in another school, returned home to Buckingham to go to his. In the first conversation, Mr. HILL found, that this new scholar of his was got to decimal fractions ; whereas he himself was but lately entered, and that but a little way, into division. This was a terrible embarrassment, at first ; but Mr. HILL took the following method of disentangling himself from it ; he set his young man to copying out the tables of decimal fractions, from Wingate ;

which engaged him for about six weeks : And in the mean time, he himself applied so hard to his Arithmetic, that he made himself master of decimal fractions, before that time was expired ; but to do this he was forced to sit up the greatest part of every night in the interval. Another case, that gave him a good deal of trouble, was one of his scholars being attacked by some popish neighbours, (1726) in order to make a convert of him. This Mr. HILL could not suffer; and was led by  
it

it into a paper war with || one of their priests, which continuing for near two years, without any other success than saving his scholar; for as to the two combatants, they disputed on, as usual, without any manner of conviction on either side.

About two years after Mr. HILL had lost his first wife, (1730) he married his second. She was a widow, and was looked

|| A man of considerable character among them, and supposed to be a bishop; who lived, at that time, with Sir Thomas Throckmorton.

upon

upon as a fortune, for she brought him a great many goods : But not long after they were married, he found his goods continually decreasing, one thing after another, and himself involved in several debts, which she had contracted. She was a bad woman in all respects ; and he suffered so much from her and her extravagances, that before they had lived two years together, the debts she had brought upon him obliged him to resolve to quit Buckingham ; and to travel and work about  
the



the country, in his business as a taylor and stay-maker. He set out for his travels on an Easter-day (1732); as indeed there was but one day in any week, that he could set out on; and stayed at different towns, in several counties, according as business offered, and his own safety would permit.

Some time before he set out, he was seized with a violent passion for learning Hebrew; for which he can give no other reason, than that he had seen several

ral quotations in that language, in an English book of controversy†, which he had been studying for some time. How very laborious a thing must it be, to pursue one's first studies in any language or science, without a single friend to give one any advice? And how unavoidable often to lose one's way, in such unknown paths, without a guide? The grammars he had for the three first years of this pursuit, were none of the best, they

† The works of Mr. Weemse, formerly one of the Prebends of Durham.

helped

helped him but poorly : His consulting with some travelling Jews, that he happened to meet with in his wanderings, was to very little purpose ; and there was one difficulty ‡ in particular, a solution of which he had been hunting after for the greatest part of that time, without receiving any help either from his books, or other enquiries. A pursuit so tedious, and so often baffled, at last quite tired out even his patience ; and one

‡ The differences of pronouncing the two vowels so alike, CAMETZ and CAMET-SCATTER.

H

day,

day, in a mixture of passion and despair, he parted with the books he had hitherto used to assist him (1735), as weak and insufficient friends. However, this proved only a sudden gust of passion; and his settled eagerness for conquering the Hebrew language soon returned again, and grew as strong as ever upon him. Some time after therefore he got Junius's grammar, to try whether that could unravel his former difficulty; but hunted it over and over, in vain. His next acquisition was a large  
one ;



one; that of thirteen Hebrew books together, which he bought for as many shillings, at Reading. Among these was Stenit's grammar (1737), which immediately cleared up the difficulty, that had engaged and perplexed him for so many years. After this, he went on quite successfully, and met with nothing but conquest after conquest; and consequently, the latter part of his travels must have gone off much more pleasingly with him, than the former.

All this while, it was necessary that the places of his residence should be concealed ; which prevented his keeping up any correspondence with his friends at Buckingham ; so that death had been so good as to ease him of his greatest embarrassment, his wife, two or three years before he heard of it. She had, as he himself allows, one child, and as she used to affirm, two by him ; but the parentage of the latter was very equivocal. However, I think, they

*Mr. H I L L.*      61

they both died soon after their mother.

On the news of this his relief from a Consort who did nothing but add to his unhappiness and difficulties while she lived, he returned January 31, 1744, *N.S.* to Buckingham. In the course of his travels he had left parcels of books in several places, and considerable ones in some; so that he came home with no more than five or six, the chief of which was a Hebrew bible, and Mayr's grammar.

mar. There he settled himself again in his first occupation of taylor and stay-maker ; which answered all his purposes very well for four or five years, in which space he procured books for his use, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew : But marrying a third wife (1747), who proved as good a breeder as his first, he began to be involved again in difficulties ; not by any fault of her's, for he speaks of her as of the best of women ; but in the former part of the time, from the increase of his family ; and in  
the



the latter, from the uncommon dearness of things, and hardness of the times.

Though Mr. HILL in his whole course of getting the three learned languages, had endeavoured to keep his acquisition of them as much a secret as he could ; it could not be so wholly concealed, but that there was some talk of it. In particular, at this period of his life, it was rumoured about the country ; “ That he could read  
“ the Bible in the same books,  
“ and the same strange figures,  
“ that

“ that the travelling Jews did.”  
 Upon hearing this, a very worthy clergyman in the neighbourhood of Buckingham, when Mr. HILL happened to be working one day at his house in the way of his trade, put a question to him (1748), relating to a difficulty in the New Testament \* ;

\* “ Pray ROBIN,” says the Doctor, “ can you solve the difficulty of St. Peter, calling the same person the son of BOSOR, whom Moses calls the son of BEOR ?” HILL’s answer was ; “ That he did not know of any difficulty in it ; that they were both one and the same name : BOSOR in the Chaldaic pronunciation being exactly the same with BEOR in the Hebrew.” 2 *Epist. of St. Peter*, c. 2. v. 14 ; and *Numbers*, c. 22. v. 5.

which

*Mr.* H I L L. 65

which he answered so readily, and so fully, that he took a liking to him, and has been his friend ever since.

The same gentleman some years after sent Mr. HILL THE ESSAY ON SPIRIT, said to be written by the late Bishop of Clogher in Ireland ; and desired him to write down his thoughts on that piece, as they occurred to him in reading it. He did so ; and I am told by those who understand Hebrew, for which there was fre-

I                      quent

quent occasion in those observations, that our humble Taylor has proved his Lordship to be in the wrong in several of his quotations and assertions in that work. This was the first piece of Mr. HILL's, that was ever printed (1753). The next thing the same gentleman employed him about, was to write a paper against the Papists, whose emissaries were then very busy in those parts, in which Mr. HILL endeavoured to show, that several of the most important and favorite doctrines of  
the



Mr. H I L L. 67

the church of Rome are novel inventions ; and consequently, that it is they, and not we, that are the innovators. About the same time, or rather in the interval between these two, HILL wrote *The Character of a Jew* ; when the bill for naturalizing that people was in agitation : This he says was the best thing he ever wrote, and was the least approved of. And laterly, he has written *Criticisms on JOB*, in five sheets ; which, I think, is the largest of all his works.

According to his own account, Mr. HILL was taken up seven years in getting Latin ; and twice as long in getting Greek : But as to the Hebrew, he says, he himself would now engage to teach it to any body of tolerable parts, and with very moderate || application, in six weeks.

He says he has read, he believes, twenty Hebrew gram-

|| At an hour, each morning ; and another, each afternoon.

mars ;

mars ; and is now writing one himself : In which sort of subject he seems likely to succeed better than in any other ; because it has been the most general study of his life. Mayr's grammar he thinks much the best of all he has read : He therefore intends to build his chiefly upon Mayr's ; as Mayr himself did on that of Cardinal Bellarmine.

He thinks, he could teach the Hebrew language, even at a distance, by way of letters ;  
that

70      *The L I F E of*

that fix, or seven, would be sufficient : And that even the pronounciation of it, as it is a dead language, might be taught the same way.

It was the worthy clergyman who first employed and encouraged him (1753), who informed me of him as a great curiosity : And on my expressing how glad I should be to see and talk with him, was so good as to invite him to his house, when I was to dine there. I found him a modest good sort  
of



of man ; and have had most  
of the particulars before-men-  
tioned from his own mouth.  
When I was saying to him, a-  
mong other things ; “ That I  
“ was afraid his studies must  
“ have broke in upon his other  
“ business too much :” He said,  
“ That sometimes they had, a  
“ little ; but that his usual way  
“ had been to sit up very deep  
“ into the nights, or else to rise  
“ by two or three in the morn-  
“ ing, on purpose to get time  
“ for reading, without preju-  
“ dicing himself in his trade.”

This

This shows his prudence and industry ; and indeed that he is almost indefatigable in any point that he strongly aims at, appears from his manner of acquiring each of the three learned languages, as above described. I have heard him say ; “ That it  
“ is very hard work sometimes  
“ to catch a Hebrew *root*, but  
“ that he never yet hunted after  
“ one, which he did not catch  
“ in the end.” I believe he may affirm the same in every thing which he has attempted ; for his application and attention seem  
to

to be beyond any thing that one can well conceive of it ; without having observed him in the process of his studies, as I have done,

He is a vast admirer of St. Jerome ; thinks him as fine a writer as Cicero ; and that nobody ever could excel him in eloquence. Yet he says, “ That  
“ he is not obliged to any one  
“ writer, nor to all others put  
“ together, for so many lights,  
“ as he has had from Father  
“ Simon.”

K

As

As his studies have lain chiefly in languages, explaining texts of scripture, and controversial divinity ; he himself is not unfond of disputing. In particular, he thinks the followers of Mr. Hutchinson wrong in almost every thing they advance ; and said, “ He would go so far, “ and almost with as much pleasure, as he came to see me, “ to dispute with a Hutchinsonian :” And his journey to me was near sixty miles ; and that, poor man ! on foot.

Through



Though the relation who first instructed him, and furnished him with the few books he had at Tring-grove, was an Anabaptist ; he himself is, and always has been, a most zealous son of the church of England ; and seems to think, that any thing's being inserted in our liturgy, or any points being held by our church, is a sufficient argument of itself, for it's being true.

Poetry has now and then come in for part of his diversion in reading ; and in particular, he had a Horace, and the Epistles of Ovid, among his books very early : But among them all his chief acquaintance have been Homer, Virgil and Ogilby ; and yet as to Homer, he had gone no farther than his Iliad (1758) ; which he had read over many times. The first day after he came to me, he desired to see the Odyſſey ; which I put into his hands, both  
in

in the original, and in Mr. Pope's translation. He was charmed with them both ; but said, " He did not know how " it was, but that it read finer " to him in the latter, than in " Homer himself." On this he was desirous of reading some more of Mr. Pope : I pointed him to the Essay on Criticism ; this charmed him still more ; and he called it, " The " wisest poem he had ever " read in his whole life." Before our parting, I made him a present of one or two poems,  
and

and above a hundred weight of fathers and polemic divinity. I dare say he will go over every line of them ; and indeed, he declared that I had now furnished him with reading at his leisure hours from work, for these seven years.

It was but last April that he was with me ; so having brought down the little circumstances of his life almost to the present time, I have nothing more to add, than the  
Comparison



*Mr.* H I L L. 79

Comparifon between him and  
MAGLIABECHI : Which, to fay  
the truth, was the principal,  
and almoft only reafon, for my  
writing their lives.



81

THE  
COMPARISON  
OF  
SIGN<sup>R</sup>. MAGLIABECHI  
AND  
MR. HILL.

NOW as to the two persons whom I have chosen to compare together, in the manner of that great and good  
L philosopher

philosopher Plutarch ; and who do not yield more in dignity to the great law-givers, and generals and heroes, which are usually the subject of his enquiries, than I do in abilities to so celebrated a writer among the antients : We may observe however, in the first place, in commendation of both of them, that they were of low birth ; and acquired whatever they did acquire, almost without any assistance from their parents, and entirely without the common helps of education. MAG-

LIABECHI



*The Comparison.* 83

LIABECHI seems to have never been at any school at all ; and HILL was at one only for two months. They were their own school-masters ; and almost as untaught and unassisted as the Saxon peasant \*, of whom we have lately had so full an account in several of our public papers.

Then again there is something extremely odd in each of them, in the beginning of their

\* John Ludwig, of Cossedaude ; a village, in the neighbourhood of Dresden.

application to study. HILL has no sooner got a Latin book into his possession, than he endeavours to learn Latin ; the very day he is master of a Greek book, he attempts that much more difficult language ; and the bare seeing a few Hebrew passages quoted, sets him upon a third. But MAGLIABECHI's beginning is yet stranger : For nothing can be more unaccountable than his fondness of looking so much on printed paper, before he could tell any one letter from another ; and, as far

as

*The Comparison.* 85

as I ever heard, without any attempt, or thoughts, at first, of distinguishing them.

They are alike too in the eagerness of their pursuit, and the intenseness of their application, when once they had begun. HILL was happy in lying under his hedge, and reading all day : And MAGLIABECHI lolled and read, for many days together, in his cradle. In the process of his studies, HILL was forced often to rob himself of a great part of the rest, more particularly

86      *The Comparison.*

larly wanted for one of his weakly constitution, to carry on his enquiries; and I have heard him say, that he came to think three or four hours sleep very sufficient for a night, after he had used himself to it for some years. MAGLIABECHI was not obliged to follow the same practice; his business gave him more time for it, in the day; and very little of that did he pass, without his eyes being fixed on some book or other.

The success of Mr. HILL in acquiring the three learned



languages, in the manner he did, is very extraordinary : But the extent of MAGLIABECHI's acquisitions is absolutely amazing ; by the accounts given of him, he had read almost every thing, remembered all he had read, and had each part of it at hand to produce whenever he was consulted about it.

I doubt not but that it is the same with the faculties of the mind, as it is with the limbs of the body, which ever is exercised much more than the rest.

It

It is a common observation, and generally holds through the whole set, that a chairman's legs will be more muscular in proportion than his arms ; and a rower's arms, will be more muscular than his legs : Just in the same manner, if one man was to exercise his imagination only, [which I fear may have been the case with some of our poets] that will grow stronger and stronger, but his judgment will become feeble ; if another was to exercise only his judgment, as happens too often  
among

among the mathematicians, the powers of his imagination will pine and fade away ; and if a third was to employ his memory only, which I fear was too far the case of MAGLIA-BECHI, his judgment by being neglected would grow weak and powerless. This, by the way, has made me so often wonder at the practice that prevails in most of our schools ; in some of which the masters exercise the memory of their boys almost perpetually, and scarce ever find out any employ for their judgment :

90      *The Comparison.*

ments : Of which strange mistake, I have heard that great genius and poet frequently complain, who says so happily, as he did every thing, in one of his poems ;

“ As on the land, while here the ocean gains,

“ In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains ;

“ Thus in the soul while memory prevails,

“ The solid power of understanding fails.

“ Where beams of warm imagination play,

“ The memory's soft figures melt away || .”

That it was thus in a great measure with MAGLIABECHI, his own admirers are not unapt to acknowledge. One of whom

|| *Mr. Pope's Essay on Criticism* ; ver. 58.

gave



gave me his character in these words; "That he was a man of  
"no genius, and an infinite memory:" And another asserts,  
"That he could not talk on any  
"subject, as other learned men  
"usually do; so that it was a  
"common saying of him in his  
"own time; that he was a learned  
"man among the booksellers,  
"and a bookseller among the  
"learned." However, this must  
still be allowed him that he had  
sorted things, which is a part of  
judgment, as well as remembered  
them, from his giving his

92      *The Comparison.*

answers so readily to all who came to consult him on so many various subjects. Yet after all, his knowledge in general was only literary knowledge ; and his mind was only, as it was called, a universal index of titles and matter : And if one could suppose a mind annexed to the Catalogue of the Bodleian library, for instance, in the whimsical manner Dr. Swift has done in his *Battle of the Books*, which should have an idea of all the words and subjects in the same order as they are there arranged ;  
it

it would, perhaps, be but too like to the mind of Signor MAGLIABECHI.

To come to the points in which they are unlike, as well as those in which they agree, [which is Plutarch's usual way too] the faculties of Mr. HILL's mind are not so much absorpt in that single one of memory, as MAGLIABECHI's were : Nor was his mind so undistinguishing in it's pursuits. MAGLIABECHI seems to have had no taste for any one science more than

94      *The Comparison.*

than another\* ; whereas Mr. HILL's first aim was, the getting of languages ; and his most favorite study since, has been critical learning, the understanding his Bible, and his religion. In short, I really begin to suspect, that he is fitter to be a clergyman, than a taylor.

\* This is what is generally said of him ; and Salvini himself says so ; “ Non era legato ad alcuna sorte di studi, in particolare :” But then he immediately adds, in a parenthesis ; “ Se non voleſſimo dire della cognizione della lingua ſanta, e delle controverſie Eccleſiaſtiche le quali egli ſapeva profondamente.” *Or. Fun.* p. 14. If the latter was really the caſe, how much would it ſtrengthen the parallel between him and Mr. HILL ?



HILL seems to have been the better Citizen, in marrying three times; and MAGLIABECHI, perhaps, was the wiser Student, in not marrying at all.

HILL has the greater merit too, in undergoing so much labour, and such fatigues, with a very weakly constitution; whereas, MAGLIABECHI'S must have been a very strong one\*.

\* “ Non lasciando passare alcun minuzzolo  
“ di tempo, che egli no' l virtuosamente impie-  
“ gasse : Al che fare molto gli conferi la sua vita  
“ sobria, e la complessione robusta.” *Salvini*;  
*Or. Fun. p. 17.*-----“ Robusto, indefesso.” *Ib.*  
*p. 27.*

# When

When some of the authors above cited speak of MAGLIA-BECHI's civility and humanity, it must be, as has been observed before, only meant of his readiness in answering the questions relating to learning, that were so often put to him. By his being compared sometimes to Diogenes, one should be apt to think that he was rather churlish, than polite or humane; in his general turn, from what his great encomiast says of him, we may conclude that he was not apt to shew any lively emotions,

98      *The Comparison.*

tions\*, either of compassion for the sufferings, or of joy on the happiness of his fellow-creatures. HILL has very quick feelings for both: And I observed in particular, that he had that tenderness of heart, which I should imagine to be one of the greatest pleasures, that people of the most generous minds are the most capable of; and which, perhaps, is one of the finest sensations allowed us, on this side of heaven. I was telling him one day of the

\* He says he was, “Sciolto da tutte qualità umane; tutto dato, destinato, dedicato, e per d'r così, consacrato alle lettere, a i libri.”  
*Or. Fur. p. 12.*



*The Comparison.* 99

sudden happiness of the famous Monsieur Pascal's father, on discovering what a wonderful progress his son had made in the study of Geometry, without the help either of books, or any master : On turning to him, I saw his eyes were flooded ; the tears, at last, streamed down his cheeks, and he could not for some moments recover his voice enough to express the joy he felt on so happy a surprize to so good a father.

I am very sorry that there is still one point remaining, in

N 2

which

which HILL is as much unlike MAGLIABECHI as in any of the preceeding. MAGLIABECHI lived and died, as has been already faid, in very great affluence ; he abounded in money, and his expences were very fmall, except for books ; which he regarded as his trueft treasure : Whereas poor Mr. HILL has generally lived in want, and lately more than ever. The very high price even of the moft neceffary provisions for this and the laft year, have not only made it often difficult for him to provide bread  
for

*The Comparison.* 101

for himself and his family ; but have in part stopt up even the sources for it, in lessening his business. Buckingham is no rich place, at best ; and even there his business lies chiefly among the lower sort of people ; and when these are not able to purchase the food that is necessary for them, they cannot think of buying new cloaths. This has reduced him so very low, that I have been informed, that he has past many and many whole days in this and the former year, without tasting any thing but water

ter and tobacco. He has a wife and four small children, the eldest of them not above eight years old : And what bread they could get, he often spared from his own hunger, to help toward satisfying theirs. People that live always at their ease, do not know, and can scarce conceive the difficulties our poor have been forced to undergo in these late hard times. He himself assured me, upon my mentioning this particular to him, that it was too true ; “ But alas ! ” added he, “ it is not only my “ ease, but has been that of hun-  
“ dreds



*The Comparison.* 103

“ dreds in the town and neigh-  
“ bourhood of Buckingham, in  
“ the last, and for the former  
“ part of this year ; and I fear,  
“ we must make many more ex-  
“ periments of the same kind,  
“ before it is at an end.”

Upon the whole ; I think we  
may fairly conclude, that they  
are both equal in merit, as to  
their industry and application to  
their studies ; each seeming to  
apply to them, as much as he  
could : But of the two Mr. HILL  
is the more sensible and better  
man ; and MAGLIABECHI, the  
more

104 *The Comparison.*

more extraordinary, the more applauded, and the more fortunate.

ADVERTISEMENT.

**I**F any one in this age so justly eminent for charities of almost all kinds, should be so far moved with the distress and necessities of so worthy and industrious a poor man, as to be inclined to help towards relieving him: They are humbly entreated to send any present which they might wish in his hands, either to Mr. Richardson, in Salisbury-court near Fleet-street, London; or Messieurs Doddsley, booksellers in Pall-Mall, Westminster; Mr. Prince, at Oxford; Mr. Thurlbourn, at Cambridge; Messieurs Hamilton and Balfour, at Edinburgh; Mr. Faulkner, at Dublin; Mr. Owen, at Tunbridge; Mr. Leake, at Bath; Mr. Cadel, at Bristol; Mr. Hinxman, at York; Mr. Richardson, at Durham; Mr. Crighton, at Ipswich; Mr. Chase, at Norwich; Mr. Burden at Winchester; Mr. Collins, at Salisbury; and Mr. Seeley, at Buckingham: And they may be assured, that whatever may be thus collected, shall be put to the properest use for the service of him, and his family.

